

ABSTRACT. Japanese theater practitioner Takeshi Kawamura (1959-) has gone relatively unnoticed since writing and directing his own plays in the early 1980s. Despite success in the early years of his career, his politically charged works reminiscent of Western influences such as Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht as well as local influences Terayama Shūji and Kara Jūrō, have received little scholarly attention. His 1995 theatrical production *Tokyo Trauma* is a scathing critique of Japanese war history and the social constructs in power that have all been for the sake of “modernity,” including modern constructions of gender and sexuality. This paper is a close reading of Kawamura’s work and how it engages audiences in reflecting on gender and sexuality through performance and performativity. In this article, I deconstruct the masquerade of gender through an analysis of *Tokyo Trauma* and reveal its work in reclaiming the construction of the Asian body from Western constraints of gender theory.

Takeshi Kawamura’s *Tokyo Trauma*: Performing Gender and Sexuality

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Takeshi Kawamura & Tokyo Trauma

Born on December 22, 1959, Takeshi Kawamura grew up during the peak years of the avant-garde theater movement in Japan, and at the cusp of Japanese rapid industrialization and the beginnings of the “Golden Sixties” but not too late after the end of the Allied Occupation in Japan. Kawamura was raised in a world of both Japanese capitalist dreams and scathing backlash against Americanization. This time of frenzy and hysteria in the Japanese economic, political, and social sectors between 1960–1980 was immensely influential to Kawamura’s development as an artist, as is evident in much of his work. At the young age of 11, in 1970, Kawamura was deeply affected by the legendary suicide of Mishima Yukio at the Tokyo headquarters of the Eastern Command of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces. The very theatricality of Mishima’s performative ritual suicide left an impression on him that triggered his first attempt at writing, directing and acting as he reenacted Mishima’s speech and suicide at his primary school’s year-end arts festival. Unsurprisingly, his first entry into the world of performance was considered problematic and improper by his teachers.

Kawamura later attended Meiji University in Tokyo, where he studied political science and economics. In 1980, while still a second-year university student, Kawamura first began writing plays and established his own theater troupe, *Daisan Erotica* (or, the *Third Erotica*). Drawing from well-known local influences such as Terayama Shūji, Suzuki Tadashi, and Kara Jūrō, Kawamura’s theatrical style is reminiscent of his avant-garde predecessors of the 1960s and 70s. Furthermore, the experimental and very physical nature of his works can be seen as further explorations in Antonin Artaud’s “Theater of Cruelty,” Bertolt Brecht’s “Epic Theater,” and

what Martin Esslin described as the “Theater of the Absurd,” which came to represent Samuel Beckett’s work. The legacy of the international avant-garde Dada movement and its localized counterpart, *Mavo*, in Japan prove very much still alive and well today in Kawamura’s work.

Kawamura’s works are notable as implicit and explicit critiques on a wide range of Japanese social issues. In some of his key works, he explores themes of the absurdity of war, ignorance of worldwide epidemics such as AIDS, and a society of despair in which religious fanatics become terrorists and school children become serial killers. His distinct style as a playwright has been constantly evolving and adapting for his audiences through a keen awareness of the society and political atmosphere around him. His works can be broadly divided into two “phases.” A close association to the underground, or *angura* counterculture movement, characterizes the first phase of Kawamura’s productions—those he created during the 1980s. *Angura*, the Japanese transliteration of “underground,” was also known as the *shōgekijō*, or “Little Theater.” This avant-garde movement actively opposed and resisted the *shingeki*, or “New Theater,” style of performance that emphasized and modeled itself after Western dramatic forms. Like many other avant-garde theater practitioners active during this time, Kawamura integrated images of Armageddon and a post-apocalyptic future with cyberpunk characters rendered ambiguously human. Furthermore, like his predecessor Terayama, Kawamura has a repertoire of “freaks, fags, foreigners, and females” he pulls from as main character types in his works (Sorgenfrei 269). Precisely by using these kinds of marginalized figures in society, Kawamura forces audiences to confront what they may feel uncomfortable seeing—producing a specular panic that Kaja Silverman, writing in a different context, relates

to locating oneself within the body of that which is not an idealizing image (26). Likewise, the content that Kawamura explores in his works call upon traumatic memories that audiences may have repressed, and produces a specular panic similar to that described by Silverman, both onstage and offstage. Sometimes referred to as “monster or freak show theater” (*kaibutsu engeki*), Daisan Erotica’s dense readings of Japan’s political and cultural development during the 1980s aimed to portray the grotesque perversities of society (Eckersall, *Theorizing* 125).

Toward the end of the 1980s, Kawamura made subtle shifts in the content of his work, which ushered in a second phase in his career. He became less preoccupied with the horrific future and more with the present state of affairs in Japan and the world. His work also became increasingly explicit in its criticisms of Japanese society and politics. Although Kawamura had mainly directed and produced plays in Japan before the 1990s, he gained international recognition after producing *A Man Called Macbeth* at the International Theater Festival of Chicago in 1992. In 1995, on the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Japan’s unconditional surrender and conclusion of the Second World War, Kawamura wrote and staged *Tokyo Trauma*. Kawamura’s work in the 1990s and beyond is characterized by its pointed social commentary and critique, fueled by Kawamura’s belief that “the myth of a peaceful and safe Japan is no longer viable” (Jansen 114). His works consistently support this belief by exposing the fragility, insecurities, and insufficiencies of Japanese society and its political system. It is works such as *Tokyo Trauma* that have led Australian scholar Peter Eckersall to laud Kawamura as “a prescient social critic who views Japan as dystopic rather than utopian, fractured rather than cohesive, violent and coercive, rather than safe and free” (*Theorizing* 128).

In Kawamura’s *Tokyo Trauma*, the entire theater becomes the stage and performance is not simply limited to physical bodies of actors but includes multilingual voiceovers, projected text and images, and real-time video footage of the audience. The work uses images of war and violence to reenact instances of traumatic memories in a fragmented fashion, similar to the way in which individuals affected by traumatic stress are hindered in their abilities to reconstruct linear narratives of their experiences. Far from limiting his critique to Japan, he offers a barrage of images of the Gulf War and American lynching photos. *Tokyo Trauma* also examines the physical body as a site of crises, constructions, and contestations always at once racialized and gendered. Kawamura works both domestically and internationally to question the chronicling of racist and sexist acts of violence. This play recounts the memory of both a near and distant past, examining the conclusion of the Asia Pacific Wars as a turning point in which notions of race, gender, and sexuality are adapted to Western modes of thinking. In recounting and giving a testimony of the various traumatic events that have haunted Japan over the last seventy years, the work also performs a kind of reclamation. *Tokyo Trauma* seeks to reclaim the Asian body from the shadows of American Occupation, the rise of global capitalism, and Western epistemic hegemony. *Tokyo Trauma*, therefore, is an examination and critique of Japan’s past, present, and possible future in a racialized and gendered world.

Fundamentally, the concepts of race and gender can mean, and have meant, drastically different things for the East and the West. Particularly America’s issues with race have been fundamentally an issue of a color line, and gender and sexuality being closely associated with religious dogma. In Japan, however, race is tied to ethnonationalism and the term *minzoku* (people,

nation, the Eastern concept of race) is favored over *jinsbu* (a Western concept of race). Gender and sexual orientation, especially homosexuality, as was the case in many societies that did not adhere to the Semitic religions, were not considered taboo and often seen as a natural component of teacher-student relations. Of course, now race and gender have become inseparable components of identity insofar as they are deterministic of each other—race is always gendered and gender is always racialized. A comparative analysis is thus also useful in formulating new ways of thinking about these constructions through lenses of colonial-postcolonial discourses and identity politics that demand further intersectional analysis.

Despite being a fictional work of entertainment produced over twenty years ago, *Tokyo Trauma* has very real implications for understanding contemporary performance and performativity of race and gender in multiple contexts. Simultaneously examining these constructs from a global and local perspective, the work provides useful commentary and insight into global and local affairs and issues so that audiences may better understand the similarities and differences that exist across the categorizations of race, gender, and nationality. In this way, Kawamura proves to have a unique and discerning worldview by digesting theoretical concerns and making them palatable for audiences who are not likely to be knowledgeable of critical race or gender theory. Ultimately, his theater is one that encourages courage, the courage to engage in critical interrogation of racial and gendered “realities” accepted as truths. Kawamura’s work deals in words and gestures that call us to act and to performatively act out of the established code of procedure.

Our Parts to Play, or Looking for My Penis(es)

SADA. This isn’t some fairytale love story.
It’s just a play, Romeo.

KICHIZŌ. Shhh! Even so, we have our parts to play.
The officer is watching us.

By examining the figures of the woman as castrator, castrated man, man as symbolic woman, homosexual man, and transgender woman in Takeshi Kawamura’s *Tokyo Trauma*, it becomes evident that these figures critically interrogate the so-called boundaries of man-woman, masculine-feminine, and heterosexual-homosexual binaries. Outside of the performance, they provide deeper levels of understanding the social reality of gender and sexual orientation as performances, rather than inherent natures of being. Act 8 begins with a Japanese love story, long exoticized and eroticized for its legacy of power and violence.

Sada and Kichi, together. After strangling and severing the penis and testicles of her lover, Abe Sada wrote the words “Sada and Kichi, together” in Ishida Kichizō’s own blood on his body. The 1936 incident became a nationwide scandal for its intensely *ero guro nansensu* (erotic, grotesque, and nonsensical) nature. Most well-known for her career as a prostitute, Abe’s life has been characterized by performances of gender, sex, and sexuality. Growing up, two of her siblings, an older brother and an older sister, were regarded as problem children for being an outstanding womanizer and seductress, respectively. As Abe’s parents attempted to correct the ways of these older siblings, Abe was often sent out of the house alone to avoid being caught in any ensuing family strife. Growing up with little sense of dependency on her parents, her friends became her closest family. After being raped by an acquaintance at the age of 15, Abe became

impulsive, irresponsible, and uncontrollable (Johnston 45). The formative and destructive roles sex and sexuality played in her life were undoubtedly traumatic and she made the choice to pursue a career in the only industry she believed she knew how and had the ability to succeed in—prostitution. Over the next two decades, Abe had several run-ins with law enforcement during her long stint as an unlicensed, illegal sex worker.

In February of 1936, Abe began working as an apprentice at a restaurant, intending to learn the skills necessary to open her own small restaurant to support herself and leave the sex industry. The owner of the restaurant was none other than the married playboy, Ishida Kichizō. It was not long before the two found themselves intimately engaged with each other, reportedly for days on end and nonchalantly continuing their behavior in front of any geisha or maids who entered their room at the teahouses (the contemporary equivalent of love hotels). Their sexual encounters continued for the next few months until May 18, when she finally strangled and castrated Ishida. Using his own blood, she marked his body with the phrase “Sada and Kichi, together” and proceeded to carve her name into his left arm with the knife she used to sever his penis. Abe kept his penis with her for the next three days, practicing necrophilia with it, until she was taken into custody by authorities. The mysterious circumstances of Ishida Kichizō’s death in addition to Abe Sada’s claim that she killed him out of sincere love only exacerbated the sensational story.

This Japanese Romeo and Juliet love story has remained deeply embedded in worldwide popular imagination. The Sada-Kichi story has spawned numerous literary, film, and performance art adaptations. The most notable of these productions is none other than Ōshima Nagisa’s 1976 sexually explicit film, *Ai no*

korīda (or *L’Empire des sens* in French, *In the Realm of the Senses* in English). Kawamura’s *Tokyo Trauma* also takes on the classic tale of love, intrigue, and murder in a performance on gender and sexuality. Act 8 repackages and re-genders William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, further complicating the signs and referents audiences are accustomed to. In a confessional-like introduction, the actors who perform Abe Sada and Ishida Kichizō liken themselves to Juliet Capulet and Romeo Montague. Although the story of Sada and Kichizō is widely known throughout Japan, for international audiences of this work, the metonymy in play functions as performative in its own right.

SADA. I am a Juliet by the name of Abe Sada.

KICHIZŌ. I am a Romeo by the name of Kichizō.

The utterances “I am a Juliet...” and “I am a Romeo...” in these cases are not constative utterances that simply describe, but performative utterances and masquerades that work in the same way as “I am a black” or “I am a woman.” Although the words suggest a “being,” they in actuality effect a change to social reality marked by the process of “becoming.” Although Sada and Kichizō claim to *be* Juliet and Romeo, respectively, they ultimately *become* the opposite and engage in a complete reversal of gender roles.

Act 8 of *Tokyo Trauma* features Sada and Kichizō playing (with) their “parts” in both physical and performative senses. The blurring of the physical and the performative in this scene becomes artistic abstraction for the two characters that imitates a kind of gender melancholia. As Butler puts it, “the conflation of desire with the real—that is, the belief that it is parts of the body, the ‘literal’ penis, the ‘literal’ vagina, which cause pleasure and desire—is precisely the kind of literalizing fantasy characteristic of the syndrome



Fig. 1: Sada/Juliet with a “penis,” Kichizō/Romeo without one

of melancholic heterosexuality” (“Melancholy Gender” 96). Lacan might see this melancholia as stemming from a confused, but dual desire to both *possess* the phallus and *be* the phallus. The phallus as “real” becomes the “literal” penis, without which “realness” is perceived lost. Rather than loss, however, the conflation of the symbolic phallus with the literal penis and its relation to desire conceals and masquerades its true absence. As Dominick LaCapra says, absence is marked by an “impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia” (46). However, to make present this melancholic “realness,” it becomes all too evident that “realness” is not always real, and what is “real” is often hardly an indicator of realness.

Kawamura denies the ability to masquerade gender by placing the penis there for all to behold. In her formative essay, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” Riviere argues that the “masquerade” is woman’s mimesis of an authentic womanliness; however, as she claims authentic womanliness is itself imitation, the very mimesis

of a citational and repetitive model of authentic womanliness renders itself a masquerade. In short, womanliness *is* a masquerade:

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Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it—much as a thief will turn out his pockets and ask to be searched to prove that he has not stolen the goods. (Riviere 306)

Butler suggests that “masquerade may be understood as the performative production of a sexual ontology, an appearing that makes itself convincing as a ‘being’” (*Gender Trouble* 64). Despite being always-already gendered and sexed by performative gestures and utterances, the external constitutions of identities are always, as per definition of performatives by Derrida, able to be repeated and repeated with *différance*—even to the point of becoming what may have

been traditionally regarded as the complete opposite. Derrida's work on citationality and performativity deconstructs such binaries of male-female, masculine-feminine, and heterosexual-homosexual. Gender and sexuality as performances thus resist in *being*, but rather are constituted by their *becoming*. However, Act 8 exemplifies just how the power of "realness" and gender normativity is still pervasive, and ultimately violent.

Kichizō "straightens" his relationship with Sada, similar to Eng's reading of *M. Butterfly*, in which René Gallimard must "straighten" his relationship with Song Liling in order to die "with his orientalist fantasy intact and, most importantly, as a nominal member of the acceptably heterosexual community" (139). Just as de Beauvoir postulates, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (301). Kichizō, like Gallimard, must *become* a woman and take on the nominal role of Juliet (with invisible penis) in order to keep the heteronormative order intact.

KICHIZŌ. Oh, Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Divorce thyself from penis and refuse thy name

But, for both men, the masquerade of womanliness ultimately fails, resulting in reprisal or retribution. For Gallimard, he must perform the part of Cio-Cio San as perfectly as the character and in doing so, commit himself to "death with honor"—honor as a *de facto* heterosexual white male (Hwang 68). As for Kichizō, he will face his impending "castration" and embodiment of a sexually abused woman driven to what many may call an act of madness—but more on this later.

The dramatic conflict between Sada and Kichizō in Act 8 is a violent performance of

the clashing desires to both possess and be the phallus as it is materialized into a "literal" penis. Furthermore, the visibility of Sada's fake penis in contrast to the invisibility of Kichizō's real penis creates the very "straightening" effect that continues to encourage the masquerade of gender as *being* or ontological. Kawamura's use of Sada and Kichizō as Juliet and Romeo, subsequently switching their gender roles, and marking each other as embodiments of both characters and genders provocatively and critically interrogates the very conception of gender and its *being*.

KICHIZŌ. You are *both* Juliet *and* Romeo.
SADA. And you are *both* Romeo *and* Juliet.
[my emphasis]

Although I translate this sentence using the words "both" and "and," the original lines do not use the more common *to* or *mo* particles used to connect two nouns in a typical Japanese sentence. Rather, Kawamura uses the particle *de*, which is often used to mean *in* (signifying location) or *by way of* (signifying method). Both of these implications are significant to the discussion of gender and its performative nature.

The "location" and "method" of gender often assumes an inherent, pre-existing point at which subjectivity, identity, and gender cannot be cleaved—or castrated. But if performance is active and continually evolving, an ontological conception of gender is only instantaneous—a static signification of being. Peggy Phelan argues that "performance's only life is in the present... Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance" (146). However, to say performance's only *life* is in the present assumes that at all other fixed points in time, past or future, performance is *dead*. Death is not correspondent to disappearance. Contrary to the so-called

“ends” of performance, performance never ends, but continues to cite and reiterate itself through a complex and interconnected matrix of gestures and utterances. Performances may disappear and make themselves invisible, but they are never not alive. Performances, in fact, are what keeps our subjectivities in existence. The process of performance is a continual process of *becoming* that resists *being*. Similarly, the various “love stories” featured in *Tokyo Trauma*—Romeo and Juliet, Sada and Kichi, and John and Lorena Bobbitt—are reiterated and reinterpreted, *becoming* new performances with new dimensions.

By using such linguistic signifiers (particles), the Japanese language thus already accounts for and allows movement across and between the multitude of discursive positions of performative gender through the aforementioned lines spoken by Kichizō and Sada. There is no beginning or end to their performance as either Romeo or Juliet as they have the ability to perform and embody facets of both roles at any time. Like the Socratic method of inquiry and discussion that

presumes an innate knowledge of all things (only the right questions are required to stimulate our own critical thinking to find the answers), gender also has no constraints in regards to performance. What is masculine and what is feminine are mere performances that find themselves not at opposite ends of a spectrum as ontological discourses would have them, but rather occupying identical spaces and fluidly embracing the space. Furthermore, if, as argued by others, it is man who knows best how to perform the “perfect” woman, it follows that the opposite should be true as well; it is woman who knows best how to perform the “perfect” man. To know and perform the Other is simultaneously mastery of the Other from a critical distance and identification with the Other in the most intimate regards.

The castration of Sada/Juliet thus represents a social inability—but perhaps more importantly, unwillingness—to break free from the established gender binary. However, the Asian body within the gender binary established and standardized by a Western episteme occupies a more

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Fig. 2: Kichizō/Romeo castrates Sada/Juliet, Kichizō relinquishes his identity as Romeo and becomes Lorena Bobbitt

liminal position, one that is reclaimed through Kawamura's *Tokyo Trauma* through the removal of sexual signifiers. Kichizō attempts to reclaim the penis as phallus—ultimately placing him in a position in which he possesses two penises, one visible and one invisible.

This castration and dual possession mirrors the state in which an individual is able to make visible or invisible his or her own performance of gender. This is not to say, however, that the individual may perform in any way he or she chooses by “will.” The very performative nature of gender is its tendency to re-cite historical citations of its own performance. In other words, the parts of man and woman have been performed throughout history in response to and as a result of the heteronormative matrix and discourse. For the Asian male, there is the dual task of forever playing the part assigned to him (as feminized or homosexualized) while melancholically seeking to make present his penis, his phallus, and his manliness. Thus, this mirror stage (to borrow Lacan's term) of recognizing the freedom to perform gender is a violent one that paradoxically calls the subject to return to gender binaries. The attempt to remove sexual signifiers is caught in a traumatic aphasia to perform and be something that often has no signifier other than the ones that have been created by Western discourses.

Strictly Speaking, “Asian Men” Cannot be Said to Exist

...because when [Gallimard] finally met his fantasy woman,
 he wanted more than anything to believe that she was,
 in fact, a woman. And... I am an Oriental.
 And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man.

—Song Liling, *M. Butterfly*

It is tempting to ask, “wouldn't it be simpler to just have a real woman play the part of the female character?” Needless to say, a question like this can be adapted to any race, gender, sexuality, religion, or political affiliation, among other things. Elise Marks comments on the necessity of a man to play the part of Song, or a non-African to perform blackness. Echoing Michel Foucault and Edward Said on the construction and maintenance of power knowledge by the ones in the position of power, perfection can only be achieved with the knowledge that is withheld from the Other:

Because he knows men's desires, and because he can approach femininity as a pure abstraction, only a man can be ‘the Perfect Woman’... in the case of Othello, only a non-African knows how to be the perfect African... A real black actor, like a real woman, has too much independent selfhood getting in the way. (Marks 117)

I remark in jest, if we allow a woman to play a woman, she will have too many ideas on what a *real* woman is, basing her assumptions on her own experiences and feelings *as a woman*—we surely can't have any of that now, can we? Is theater to be a mimicry of reality, or a presentation of fantasy? From an alternative point of view, perhaps reality is itself a mimicry of the theater, as we construct social reality not from what we know ourselves to be, but what we want to know others to be. What better way to show off epistemic and hegemonic muscle than to dictate the performances of others and effectively institutionalize what and who any individual can be?

However, the performance of dominance over the Other can be used against the dominant power itself. The very construction of what it

means to be a certain race or gender or sexual orientation has both generalized and oppressed groups of people that fall outside of the norm of white maleness, but simultaneously has given these groups a name under which to mobilize. Names have the performative power to constitute subjectivity in language. In the case of oppressed racialized and gendered individuals, however, the name that interpellates them is injurious from the start. Kawamura uses Asian faces to play black and white ones, and male bodies to play female bodies and vice versa. His direction is not without purpose, as he seeks to reveal the inadequacies and absurdities of the pressures and burdens society has created for racialized and gendered bodies through naming them. The performances of race and gender have historically been constructed by the dominant discursive power. To be black or Asian or a woman is and has been defined by the historical citations of performances directed by another. Kawamura attempts to reclaim those performances in *Tokyo Trauma*.

In his analysis of *M. Butterfly*, Eng explains that “rather than seeing at the site of the female body a penis that is not there to see, Gallimard refuses to see at the site of the Asian male body a penis that *is* there to see...” [author’s emphasis] (2). Rather than create a fetish to substitute for the absence of a penis on the female body as Freud suggests, the Asian male in this situation encourages the white man to create a reverse fetishization in which the penis that is there to be seen is disavowed and denied. In the same way that Song performs the female role that Gallimard has created for him, the male actor who performs as Kichizō becomes the female figure necessary to continue the story. However, where Song is fully aware and conscious of his “real” manliness, Kichizo loses his penis-phallus and his awareness of his sex and the masquerade of womanliness consumes him.

Kawamura then seamlessly intertwines the stories of Sada-Kichi and Lorena-John Bobbitt by reversing abstract gender roles through a “literal” penis that serves as a materialization of the symbolic phallus. Similar to the Abe Sada incident of 1936, American Lorena Bobbitt (née Gallo) cut off her husband’s penis in 1993. Some key differences, however, are important to note. This was *not* a Romeo and Juliet love story by any means. Lorena was a victim of intense emotional, physical, and sexual abuse perpetrated by her husband during their marriage. Forced to succumb to John’s every sexual whim and even have an abortion, Lorena suffered from clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder from the constant and unrelenting abuse. Finally, she decided to castrate her husband in his sleep. Unlike Abe Sada, Lorena did not first kill her husband, and furthermore, John had his penis surgically reattached. Like Abe, Lorena’s own story became widely sensationalized and the word “bobbittize” entered medical terminology to mean genital mutilation or penis removal performed outside of a medical facility.

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Fig. 3: A “gay” lawyer and Kichizō/Lorena Bobbitt, the traumatic testimony of Lorena Bobbitt

LAWYER. And then?
 KICHIZŌ. I ran to the kitchen.
 LAWYER. And why did you run to the kitchen?
 KICHIZŌ. To get a kitchen knife.
 LAWYER. Why did you need a kitchen knife?
 KICHIZŌ. To cut my husband's penis off.

Kawamura recreates Lorena's trial in court and her testimony, immediately after Kichizō/Romeo "reclaims" the phallus from Sada/Juliet. Why does Kawamura juxtapose the images of Sada-Kichi with the story of Lorena Bobbitt? Of course, both involve a woman castrating her lover, but there is something much deeper to be analyzed. In both instances, the very meanings of woman and femininity are thrown into question. The imagery is grotesque, but the visual disjunction is even more shocking. That which is visually registered as a male becomes confused to the audience's senses as a symbolic female. Again, the relationship of signs and referents out of joint in order to shock senses and beliefs of what gender is and has been constructed to be. It compels audiences to question the Asian body, masculinity, femininity, and sexuality from both a Western and Eastern gaze.

A shallow reading of the scene leads to the simple conclusion that these two incidents were chosen precisely for their similarity as acts of violence committed by women against men. A deeper reading, however, opens up the possibility of examining the incidents as vastly different *because* of their similarity. To conflate these two events strips them both of their psychological and social complexity, which can only be truly understood in their own cultural contexts. Kawamura boldly makes the statement that the Asian body is for Asia to reclaim, no longer to be recycled and reiterated by Western canonical texts of gender theory, despite their usefulness in structuring a foundation for understanding the key concepts and constructs of masculinity,

femininity, and sexuality. Rather than conflate the two unique events, as attempts to universalize race or gender theory have often come at the expense of excluding out other identities, *Tokyo Trauma* engages in teasing out the peculiarities and nuances of various signifiers. In other words, Kawamura deconstructs Western deconstruction by reminding audiences that meanings of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality have been inculcated by Western epistemic hegemonies, and that the Asian body and signifiers of such concepts cannot neatly align themselves to the constraints of the Western body. Furthermore, in the face of reimagining the meanings of man and woman in this scene, the figure of symbolic woman is juxtaposed with the figure of the "gay" lawyer, scantily clad in black lingerie, stockings, and high heels. In *Tokyo Trauma*, Kawamura's "gay" lawyer is revealing of popular stereotypes regarding what it means to be homosexual or transgender in Japan.

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(Gender) Bending the Rules

Japan is still a long way from accepting homosexuality or gender dysphoria as natural, as opposed to a pathological disorder, just as in many other Asian countries. There are no laws to prevent discrimination against sexual identity or orientation and social recognition of homosexuality straddles a fine line between visibility and invisibility, normalcy and otherness. Although many might be tempted to view Japan as a rather liberal nation with its abundance of television programs that feature homosexual celebrities, the image of the homosexual as portrayed by these celebrities is often homogeneous and narrowly defined. The "best" gays are the ones that are flamboyantly and unabashedly performing (and *conforming*)

to a feminized and emasculated stereotype. The “best” gays include men such as drag queen Miwa Akihiro, singer Mikawa Ken’ichi, and Peter Pan look-alike Ikehata Shinnosuke (stage name *Peter*). Mikawa is especially notable for his *onē* (effeminate, literally *elder sister*) style of behavior—a representation of homosexuality that is expected to be performed by homosexuals. On the other end of the spectrum are the best “gays,” who perform a hyperbolic masculine counter to the effeminate drag queen or transgender figure. These individuals are distinct for their attention to physical fitness—a model physique defined by refined pectoral and abdominal muscles in opposition to the lanky (often effeminate) Asian male body stereotype attributed to Asians of any sexual identity. One of these “gays” in particular has captured the adoration of many heterosexuals and scorn of homosexuals—Sumitani Masaki, who is better known by his stage name Razor Ramon Hard Gay. The fact that Hard Gay is in reality a heterosexual male who only parodies and stereotypes the social minority of homosexual males in Japan is significant in shaping perceptions of gender and sexuality in contemporary society.

Linguistically and performatively, the Japanese loanword for “gay” (*gei*) is generally used to identify drag performers or transgender (regardless of whether or not they have had sex reassignment operations) individuals, rather than homosexuals. Kawamura’s “gay” lawyer mimics and parodies these images of Japanese “gayness” textually and performatively. Within the script, there is no indication of how to perform as the “gay” lawyer. The actor simply wears black lingerie, stockings, and high heels and may raise the tone or pitch of his voice when speaking to imitate perceived indicators of “gayness.” At the level of performance, the actor often portrays both extremes, combining the *onē* effeminate behavior with the hyper masculine physical appearance.

The binary of what constitutes and signifies gayness in Japan is criticized as mere theatricality. Furthermore, the signification of *gei* has been equated with sexual “deviance” and gender variance, suggesting that their relationship to each other are mutually and mandatorily bound to the signs and referents of the other. Thus, for most of Japanese society, to be homosexual simultaneously signifies gender dysphoria and indicates the belief that the individual is in a process of “rewriting” the signs and referents to “correctly” perform his or her assigned gender and sexuality. This is the image the Japanese entertainment industry wants to make visible, and it is the very image the public desires to see (a queer desire in itself). Even when, on the opposite end of the spectrum, a “homosexual” individual performs masculinity, the performance is always over-exaggerated, as if to compensate for a “real” presence of heteromascularity. Ultimately, homosexuality in Japan is either seriously feminine or comically masculine.

On the other hand, individuals who often do not identify as homosexual but suffer from gender dysphoria and have undergone the operational procedures of sex reassignment surgery have been legally allowed to change their gender for use on all official documents since 2008, partly due to the efforts of public officials such as Kamikawa Aya. Influential in promoting efforts to improve rights for LGBTQ individuals in Japan, she was first elected to the Tokyo municipal office in 2003. At that time, Kamikawa, born male and on hormone medication to produce estrogen, submitted her election application papers leaving the space for “sex” blank. As the first openly transgender individual to seek or win elected office in the Setagaya ward, the most populous district in Tokyo, she received immense attention, visibility, and surprisingly, support. Kamikawa’s re-election for a second term in 2007 and again for her third term in 2011 speaks to her popularity and

changing social and political attitudes in Japan. The passing of the law—itsself a performative utterance—however, came not only with positive outcomes, but also negative consequences. The very name of the law, “Act on Special Cases in Handling Gender for People with Gender Identity Disorder (*seidō itsusei shōgaisha no seibetsu no toriatsukai no tokurei ni kansuru hōritsu*),” defines and declares transgender and third gender psychology, behavior, and biology abnormal or unnatural. In other parts of the world, the medical term for the diagnosis of “gender identity disorder” has been replaced by “gender dysphoria,” in attempts to de-pathologize gender variance and reduce stigmatization against transgender or gender nonconforming individuals.

Although less recognized and less visible than homosexuals, transgender individuals who have undergone sex reassignment operations have steadily increased. As such, there have been greater efforts geared toward awareness and education of gender dysphoria. The early 2000s saw the rise of a number of transgender celebrities coming out about their struggles with their gender assignment at birth. Singers, actresses, and models such as Haruna Ai, Satō Kayo, Tsubaki Ayana, and Nakamura Ataru are some especially notable and successful individuals in the Japanese entertainment industry who have all undergone sex reassignment surgery and have legally changed their genders from male to female. The immensely popular television drama *Last Friends* (*Rasuto Furenzu*) that aired from April to June of 2008 also engaged with gender dysphoria as one of the main female protagonists of the series struggled with her love for another female friend and the decision whether or not to undergo sex reassignment surgery and live as a man. The serial was a serious invitation to the public to become more aware of issues of gender dysphoria, the hardships and obstacles

of transgender individuals before transitional surgery, and liberation from the constraints of gender. *Last Friends* was also memorable for introducing to the public eye a character that was assigned female gender at birth—unlike many of the aforementioned individuals who had transitioned from being assigned male at birth. In a small, but significant way, *Last Friends* raised questions of the tenuous relation of anatomical sex to gender and identity.

In *Tokyo Trauma*, a young military officer reveals his own masquerade just moments before the conclusion of the play. For all his gun-toting, foul-mouthed, and heavily politicized war-lusting hyper-masculinity, he reveals another side to himself that represents the fusion of masculinity and femininity, embodying both male and female attributes.



Fig. 4: Young Officer/Armies Pub Akemi reporting for duty

The young officer enters the stage. With gun in hand and Japanese sword fastened to his waist, he puts on a wig and applies makeup. He wears a military uniform over his upper body, but a miniskirt and high heels for his lower half.

The young officer salutes to the audience in a cute, girlish manner.

In this particular performance, the military officer even wears artificial breasts. Kawamura's portrayal of the Officer's transition into becoming Armies Pub Akemi speaks to the commoditization of gender, as if to say, you can buy your breasts and still have your phallic sword. In a hyper-capitalistic world, "gender has a price tag—and once in the market, it can be bought and sold, manipulated by the surgeon's knife, deft clefts in the market of elegant signs" (Phelan 105). Nevertheless, these clefts, however deft, still blur the distinction between possessing the phallus and being the phallus. Naturally, the invisibility of the literal penis makes us wonder whether it is truly there. This queer desire to know what is anatomically present and absent is a reproduction of the failure to sever the relation between biological sex and performative gender. This scene also speaks to the historical moment immediately following Japan's unconditional surrender. The Allied occupation of Japan has been regarded by many as a period of complete submission to the Western powers, especially to the United States. This complete submission is analogous to an emasculation and feminization of Japan by occupation forces. Forced to undergo a symbolic sex reassignment operation, the former hyper-masculinity of imperial Japan was reduced to a melancholic femininity against the Western white male figure. However, Japan's own historically tense relations with the rest of East Asia continue to haunt the region. Even if Japan is feminized against the West, it continues to masquerade as hyper-masculine against the rest of Asia—the nation becoming itself a sort of third gender, giving itself the flexibility to perform contextually.

The systemic violence that has no national borders continues to refuse recognition

of gender nonconforming individuals and perpetuates the masquerade and pressures to conform to the oppressive male-female binary. Even if the economy of gender allows for sex reassignment operations to be exchanged and renders biological sex a commodity, gender itself continues to oppress those outside of its domain. Counterintuitively, biological sex is understood as nature, despite the ability to cut away at the body or simply graft other body parts onto it. Yet, the construction of gender has been falsely conflated with sex, pressuring the two to match each other. It has become that what is "natural" is able to be changed, but what is merely a social construct or performance cannot. The concepts of sex and gender have proven themselves out of joint, but in their disjunction render available a new performance and construction.

Conclusion: Who Cares, Who Queers

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Heterosexuality as the norm has had certain associations to modernity for Japanese society. In contrast to its neighbors China and Korea, Confucianism never took a strong hold in the construction of social and cultural mores. Specifically, in regards to sex and sexuality, the absence of Confucius thought may have accounted for a lack of emphasis on the importance of chastity or monogamy. Japanese society has historically been accepting of prostitution as a form of entertainment. Furthermore, homosexuality and bisexuality in Japan was (and, some would argue, still) not considered taboo. It was only in 1873 that the Japanese government outlawed sodomy, though it would be repealed only seven years later. At a time when Japan felt the need to prove itself "modern" and "civilized," making "deviant" sexual behavior illegal was nothing more than imitating the West and taking

the West's taboos as its own. For most of modern Japanese history, the issue of sexuality can perhaps be best described by the former U.S. policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Same-sex intimacy is recognized as real but it is simply foreclosed in silence by those against homosexuality as well as those who consider themselves homosexual in order to protect themselves. In other words, one may be queer in private, but conform to the pressures of heteronormativity in all other cases. The coexistence between public image and private action, however, has always been culturally significant for Japan.

With homosexuality becoming more and more accepted in the West, Asian countries are seeing an increase of queer communities and LGBTQ individuals coming out of the closet. Despite such progress, like the self-perpetuated myth of racial homogeneity, the majority of Japanese LGBTQ individuals choose to remain hidden from the public eye and ultimately, only come out to other LGBTQ individuals. Often, Japanese men and women will still seek to marry and have children in response to societal pressures, continuing a queer lifestyle in private, unbeknownst to their spouses, families, or heterosexual friends. The very linguistic markers and terminology employed in Japanese such as *gei* ("gay"), *dōseiai* (homosexual), and a variety of more pejorative terms often render queer gayness and homosexuality ambiguously different. Sexuality then, in Japan, is met with a fundamental "untranslatability" full of ambiguous slang and codes that never neatly align with Western or American conceptions of love, sex, gender, or sexual orientation.

In an age when new genders and sexualities are becoming more visible each day, the historical binary of man-woman is breaking down. Indeed, the dominance of Western epistemology and discourse on gender has overshadowed and made

invisible a number of cases in which countries across the world have identified and accepted third, fourth, or even fifth gender identities. The *bijra* of South Asia, *muxe* of Southern Mexico, and *kathoey* of Thailand are but a few examples of legally recognized third genders. In Indonesia, the ethnic group known as Bugis divides their society into five genders. These gender identities and the sexual identities that accompany them are met with an untranslatability, and they exist as signified concepts without signifiers when constrained by the English language. Nonetheless, in the face of such progressive societies, the white Western world has been staunchly conservative when it comes to gender and sexual fluidity. Raised gendered, queering the heteronormative pressures that have scripted the citations of gender that individuals perform today is what will change the established code of procedures in effect that define and distinguish the binaries of man-woman, masculine-feminine, and heterosexual-homosexual. Gender and sexuality as performative are radical to the extent that they resist the very existence of a normative, hetero or otherwise.

In conclusion, my purpose is not to simply argue that concepts such as race and gender are not real, for anyone can idealistically agree as such and still be compelled to perform them as "realities." Rather, I am proposing new ways of understanding these performatives so that we may change and act out of the established codes of procedure that have been accepted over time. Although race and gender are by no means concepts constrained to certain regions but rather function as regimes of truth, the historical, cultural, social, political, economic, and religious contexts of locales differ. In analyzing a Japanese work of art, I have sought to deepen this understanding through comparative analysis of the local Japanese context with an American one,

which, arguably, is quickly becoming the global standard with each passing day. This work in particular, Takeshi Kawamura's *Tokyo Trauma*, has gone unnoticed for over twenty years. But even as Japan, and the world, remember the war that changed Japan forever seventy years ago, this work continues to ask questions that have gone unanswered.

The performance of race and gender lives on in future performances and restagings, adaptations across media, and text immemorial in its publication, which simultaneously opens up an infinite number of ways in which the concepts can be interpreted. Takeshi Kawamura's *Tokyo Trauma* is a work that highlights the performative roles of race and gender as masquerades that have become real and conversely, it simultaneously highlights the possibility for them to return to mere masquerades. By using the theater as an assumed space of fantasy, Kawamura is able to precisely reveal the fantasies that actually make up reality. His work pushes the limits of what is real and what is illusion, forcing audiences to rethink the very stability of social reality and its various constructs. Like Hermann Nitsch's spectacular *Orgies Mysteries Theater*, *Tokyo Trauma* "activates history by presenting (and representing) violence and reanimating traumatic narratives of the past *in the present* [original emphasis]" (Jarosi 841). If the past always presents the ability to be re-presented, the re-presentation itself is a citation. Thus, the past has no end because it can always be brought to the present and by extension, as re-presentations with a *différance*, the future can be said to be composed of nothing more than these present representations of the past. Ultimately, it is not a question of when the performance will end, but rather, how will we find new ways to perform. In performing our pasts, we simultaneously alter our present and thus perform our very futures into existence.

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Tokyo Trauma

written by kawamura takeshi

translated into english by toshi pau

Act 8: Sex Education

Oshima Nagisa's 'In the Realm of the Senses' plays on the monitor.

Prisoners are engaging in manual labor.

A woman moves downstage, she is wearing a nametag that reads "Abe Sada."

She wears a dildo attached to her waist.

A man wearing a nametag, "Kichizō," comes forward.

SADA. I am a Juliet by the name of Abe Sada.

KICHIZŌ. I am a Romeo by the name of Kichizō.

SADA. Oh, Romeo. I already have my own penis now. Therefore Romeo, I have no need to drive you to your death.

KICHIZŌ. Shhh!

SADA. Even now, you just don't know when to give up, do you Romeo? This isn't some fairytale love story. It's just a play, Romeo.

KICHIZŌ. Shhh! Even so, we have our parts to play. The officer is watching us.

SADA. That's exactly why we should stop!

KICHIZŌ. No way. This is sex education. For the sake of the wounded Japanese army!

SADA. Japanese?

KICHIZŌ. Yes, Japanese. The same people thrown into fright by the underground sarin attacks. Jewish Japanese.

SADA. The Star of David...?

KICHIZŌ. No. Atheists are killed by the religious. This is the very reason why we perform, Juliet.

SADA. But I already have a penis...

KICHIZŌ. Where the hell did you get something like that?

SADA. From the internment camp. In the Unit 731 laboratory.

KICHIZŌ. You are both Juliet and Romeo.

SADA. And you are both Romeo and Juliet. I've cut off your darling little penis. The play is quickly coming to its conclusion.

KICHIZŌ. Shhh! The officer is still watching, you know.

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Oh, Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Divorce thyself from penis and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll sever all ties between penis and body.

SADA. You say sever, but it is already separated!

KICHIZŌ. 'Tis but my penis that is my enemy. Thou art thyself, though without a penis. What's a penis? It is not hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man. What's a penis? So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called, retain that dear figure which he owes even without that thing. Romeo, doff thy penis, and for that penis, which is no part of thee take all myself.

SADA. I shall take thee, if only you agree to my direction.

The two entangle themselves in each other's embrace.

Kichizō cuts off Sada's "penis." She falls to the ground.

A "gay" lawyer appears. Three male students and three female students come out on stage, sit on the sandbags, and behave like young couples sitting on benches at the park.

LAWYER. Please state the name of the defendant.

KICHIZŌ. Lorena Bobbitt.

LAWYER. Is it true that you, Lorena Bobbitt, cut off the penis of your husband, Romeo Bobbitt?

KICHIZŌ. Yes.

LAWYER. And why did you do such a thing?

KICHIZŌ. That morning, we had a quarrel. We were constantly fighting with each other. We even called Mino Monta for advice, but he was very vague.

LAWYER. And who was the guest celebrity on the show at that time?

KICHIZŌ. Hattori Katsuhisa.

LAWYER. Well it would have been better if it were Watanabe Fumio.

KICHIZŌ. Yes...

LAWYER. Have you, the defendant, ever been victim to domestic abuse by the plaintiff?

KICHIZŌ. Yes.

LAWYER. Please explain this abuse in as concrete terms as you can.

KICHIZŌ. He would kick me and punch me.

LAWYER. And where exactly were you kicked and punched?

KICHIZŌ. Mainly my face and my stomach. When I was pregnant, he kicked me in the stomach often.

LAWYER. When exactly would he inflict this kind of violence on you?

KICHIZŌ. There wasn't ever really a reason for it. He would just beat me whenever he was in a bad mood.

LAWYER. Is there anything else he did to you?

KICHIZŌ. I was forced to have anal sex.

LAWYER. And you really dislike that, don't you?

KICHIZŌ. Yes.

LAWYER. Did you indicate this to him?

KICHIZŌ. Yes, I pleaded with him again and again to stop. But he wouldn't. He would simply smile at me in his sick and twisted way and say to me, "It's because you're so loose, it feels much better here."

LAWYER. And there is more related to this "smile", isn't there?

KICHIZŌ. Yes. When he forced me to have an abortion. When we were in the hospital waiting room, he whispered in my ear, "You're going to go to hell for this, you know. Hehehehehe." That smile... *(She begins to sob)*

LAWYER. You had just given birth, hadn't you?

KICHIZŌ. Yes.

LAWYER. How often would you say you two engaged in sexual intercourse?

KICHIZŌ. Everyday, without fail.

LAWYER. You disliked this, didn't you?

KICHIZŌ. Yes. I've... I've never known what an orgasm feels like!

LAWYER. Has sex always been painful for you?

KICHIZŌ. Yes. My husband would often whisper in my ear things like "it feels good, doesn't it?" or "you like how hard it is?" But never... not even once I felt...
Whenever I was on my period, he would force me to give him oral sex.

LAWYER. Please describe the morning of the incident.

KICHIZŌ. It was before my morning commute. We were fighting and yelled at each other back and forth, I tried to leave the house but my husband suddenly grabbed me from behind and threw me on the bed.

LAWYER. And what was the cause of this altercation?

KICHIZŌ. I complained about my husband's girlfriends.

LAWYER. What kinds of complaints did you have?

KICHIZŌ. He came home late the night before, so I felt I had a right to know why.

LAWYER. And what happened after you were thrown onto the bed?

KICHIZŌ. I screamed and begged him to stop, but he wouldn't listen. "No one can fuck you better than I can!" he shouted. And then he tore off my clothes and underwear... and then he entered me. I remember how much it hurt... it felt like I was being split in half. *(She sobs again)*
I was on the bed and I could see the lace curtain of the window being blown back and forth by the breeze outside. It was at that moment, when my body was being split into two that I thought to myself, why me! Why am I the only one in the world who has to experience these things?
And suddenly, feelings of sorrow and misery overwhelmed my entire body. I looked over and saw that wet penis, fully exposed while he slept...

LAWYER. And then?

KICHIZŌ. I ran to the kitchen.

LAWYER. And why did you run to the kitchen?
 KICHIZŌ. To get a kitchen knife.
 LAWYER. Why did you need a kitchen knife?
 KICHIZŌ. To cut my husband's penis off.

The fallen Sada rises to her feet.

She staggers toward the sandbags, but she is shot dead before she can escape over them.

MALE STUDENT. Romeo and Juliet.
 The speed of this capitalist society is to blame for our excessive labors.
 If this is true, then the name of this story should be Speed.
 We have never pushed Juliet to marry even once.
 Hectic love is the privilege of youth, isn't it?
 It's all dependent on market competition.
 Hara Setsuko was raped by John Wayne.
 I'm standing at the ruins of what was once Ginza.
 My father and mother, my grandfather and my grandmother...
 their worst fear was that I, raised on school lunches and *hato mug* tea, would
 somehow be branded by it from the surface of my skin all the way down to the
 inside of my guts. Anyway, it was only my own dead body that I couldn't find.
 You won't find any corpses where there are ruins. It was only after I read
 Schwarzkopf's *It Doesn't Take a Hero* that I truly knew why.
 It's all strategic. The American military and mass media hide the dead bodies so
 anti-war sentiments don't get stirred up in the viewers at home.
 My dead Juliet. You must once again become the daughter of a land that will
 never know true liberation.

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The male students leave.

“Exercise 9 : Japanese internationality”

“exercise 9 日本人の国際性”

Three women in their undergarments stand behind the sandbags. Kichizō joins them.

The women are holding vibrators in their hands.

They simultaneously turn them on.

They hold the vibrators in their mouths.

There is a group of “Japanese.” They are dressed like businessmen and wear glasses.

From the other side of the sandbag barrier, they throw cosmetics products at the women.

They prepare a camera to take a reunion picture.

The women begin to apply makeup.

Another group of “Japanese” appear. They have protruding teeth, are wearing glasses, Japanese long-johns pulled up over their stomachs, and wooden sandals.

They too throw cosmetics products at the women.

The women use their newly received items to apply more makeup.

Another group of “Japanese” come forward. They are wearing only fundoshi.

They are each holding a large bottle of alcohol and are clearly inebriated. One of them begins to playfully flirt with the women (plus Romeo) and tries to force them to cross the barrier.

The women collapse on top of the sandbags.

The various groups of “Japanese” leave, speechless.

The three women put on chima jeogori.

The dwarf enters the stage.

DWARF. Wake up! You’re always sleeping!

Sada gets up. The dwarf attacks her.

The three women convulse as if they were being attacked along with Sada.

SADA. I am Japanese.

THE WOMEN. I am Japanese.